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ABSTRACT

This paper presents findings of a study that identified factors that facilitate or inhibit change, examined the effects of the change process on the school/community population, and provided recommendations to school and community personnel who may face change in the future. A three-tier research design included a review of the literature, a survey of 190 randomly selected middle-level Virginia schools, and in-depth case studies of three out-of-state schools that were in the process of implementing major changes. A total of 1,129 parents, teachers, speciality area teachers, and school administrators responded to the survey, a 64 percent response rate. Findings indicate that a consensually defined school mission is fundamental to effective change; change takes enormous time and effort; both resources and training need to be channeled toward systemic changes rather than piecemeal, inservice workshops; and personnel who are philosophically aligned with a school's mission and have professional expertise can greatly enhance the change process and communication among constituents. In addition, leadership must have a clear sense of mission, a vision as to where that mission is headed, and the energy to integrate multiple changes at once. However, a discrepancy existed between the ideal of "systemic" change and the types of changes happening in Virginia schools. The schools appeared to be grappling with a multiplicity of changes made on either a piecemeal basis or on a programmatic basis. In addition, these changes were not integrated into the notion of broad, systemic change representing any fundamental educational paradigm shift. A conclusion is that change is a process rather than a product. More work needs to be done communicating to local education agencies how to integrate a variety of types of change toward an operational mission of effective education. Eight tables are included. (Contains 43 references.) (LMI)

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RESTRUCTURING EDUCATION FOR THE 21st CENTURY: A UNIVERSITY CONSORTIUM STUDY

Presented at

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The restructuring of American education in general, and middle schools in particular, is a long-term, high-investment process which is meant not as a quick-fix to education problems, but rather as long-term systemic change to an entire education system. The literature is replete with reports of bold initiatives to change the ways schools operate, the kinds of curricula they offer, and the patterns of instruction used so as to create true communities of learners. In order to effect systemic change, multiple levels of change need to occur. The speed at which these changes occur is affected by such factors as public policy mandates; available funding; leadership; theoretical knowledge; and public support.

Monitoring the extent of actual change is a necessary modulator to effecting systemic change. The measurement of the difference between rhetoric and reality offers us a clearer picture of where we are and where we need to go next. An oft quoted maxim is that, "Change is a journey; not a destination." How the journey is progressing is the issue at hand.

The purpose of this study was to review the change process and factors which have effected changes in Virginia middle schools. Specifically, the study attempted to gain insight into factors which facilitate or inhibit change; verify how the change process effects the school/community population; and provide recommendations to school and community personnel who may face change in the future.

To accomplish these purposes, a university consortium team developed a three tiered approach to data acquisition. One tier provided a review of the literature on school change; a second tier surveyed parents, teachers, and school administrators at 190 randomly selected Virginia middle schools; and the third tier did in-depth case studies of three out-of-state schools which are in the process of making major changes.

Literature Review

The change process in education has been studied from a variety of angles. Most experts on change agree that examining barriers up front enhances the chance of success at the end. Margolis (1991) described resistance to change as positive, in that it allows groups to focus on the objections

teachers may have to proposed changes. This resistance can be lessened through long term in-service education and training, or group commitment and team building activities. Margolis suggests several ways to lessen teacher resistance to change, such as including teachers in the planning process, examining resources to support change, looking at the effects of the proposed change on school norms and culture, and convincing agents of the importance of the proposed goals and outcomes.

Hyle (1992) cautions that teachers and schools must also be aware of the "interplay between local knowledge and research knowledge" when collaborative efforts are undertaken between university and local educational associations. Resistance has been noted to be greatest when change occurs as a result of "top-down" federal, state, or district mandates (David, 1990). David also notes that there have been so many changes in school operations during the past three decades that most teachers feel that once the new programs are implemented, they too shall quickly pass.

Emerging as one of the largest barriers to effective change is the lack of public support. Snyder (1993) reports the trends for public funding support is shifting from federal and state to a greater dependence upon local resources. Constant shifts in the importance of mandated and funded initiatives reduce the commitment of teachers and administrators to proposed ideas, and increase their resistance to change. (David, 1990; Snyder, 1993; Louis, 1993).

To lessen resistance or eliminate barriers to school change, research has focused upon the use of consortia in the planning and implementation of reforms. McGrew-Zoubi (1993) provides an example of small Oklahoma schools who banded together to meet the mandated reforms for goal-based curricula. By working in monthly study groups over the time span of a year, the teachers grew to not only accept the impending changes, but actually reported being excited and empowered in the process. Their personal self-esteem increased, and they demonstrated commitment to the programs, continued collaboration with the other schools, and were supportive of peer mentoring for those not directly involved in the planning.

David's (1990) review of the school transformation process points toward the greatest successes coming from changes which were "relatively easy and fit well into the current operations of schools." The nature of the change will have an effect on the chances of success. She recommends enlisting teachers in discussions directed toward finding ways to link proposed changes with existing programs, and initiating change through adoption of texts or easy instructional shifts first, before undertaking extensive transformations of the total program.

David's review (1990) also pointed out that schools which changed effectively took more time than those who jumped right into immediate change. A realistic time frame was in the range of two to three years from the vision of change to the limited plan of adoption in a school.

Many educational researchers focus on the need for in-service training and re-education of school faculty and administration. Successful schools offer teachers continuing educational opportunities. The re-educational process needs to begin during the planning phases for impending changes, to enhance teacher commitment and reduce fears. It then needs to continue during the implementation phases, to allow teachers opportunities to share successes and trouble-shoot problems with colleagues facing the same challenges. Successful change schools offered on-site and university education for teachers, with college credit being awarded for participation.

Finally, much of the recent research has focused heavily upon the characteristics of the leader in the change process. Leadership styles of superintendents, principals, counselors and psychologists have been examined in order to search for conflict resolution strategies during change (de Mesquita & Ballard, 1993; Greenberg, 1991); to examine principal's roles with respect to the total school culture (Pitts & Hickey, 1992; Peel & Waler, 1993); and effects of site-based management on school reform (Hamilton, 1993). What has emerged from the study of school administration and change is a consensus not so much on the "best" leadership style or personality, but rather the critical role of the leader, throughout all phases of the change process. The leader must be accepted by the

teachers, must be a motivator, must have vision, and must demonstrate personal commitment combined with a humanistic recognition of the challenges the educational change agents face (Evans, 1993; Villa, 1992; Short, et. al, 1991). The leader has variously been recognized as either the facilitator for effective change, or a major stumbling block for change plans gone awry. The school system preparing for extensive change must choose its leader wisely, and carefully, if effective change is to have a chance.

Results of the survey of Virginia schools (reported in the next section of this paper) and the study of out-of-state change schools (*Case Studies of Promising Change Schools*), demonstrate that what is actually happening in schools largely reflects many of the findings of the literature review. It is strongly suggested that school administrators and change agents prepare for change through a careful and extensive review of research findings before initiating a major change process.

Virginia Middle School Change Process Survey

A University consortium met several times to formulate an action plan and construct a two part survey of the change process. The survey (Appendix A) was piloted upon a select group of stakeholders, and revised with their input. Once constructed and revised, the survey was mailed to 190 Virginia middle schools. Randomization was established through selection of every eighth school on an alphabetized list of Virginia schools. No more than four schools were chosen from any given school division.

Superintendents sent questionnaire packets to the targeted schools where the principal then distributed the surveys to parents, classroom teachers, specialty area teachers, and administrators.

Limitations of the Study

As with any survey, the data may be biased due to the voluntary and self-report status of the respondents. Also, the school principals were given instructions to distribute the surveys to teachers, staff, and parents. The possibility of bias in this distribution may reflect opinions favorable to or in

support of those of the school principal.

Several of the surveys were returned from superintendents or school division representatives declining the invitation to take part in the study. Some reported being "too busy"; others felt that they "had too many surveys to return which amounted to nothing," or "that it didn't matter what they wrote--no change would occur from the results."

Another limiting factor is that no causal or correlational factor can be assumed from this study, and inferential statistics have not been analyzed to date. The intent of the study was to gather opinions about change from individuals involved in the change process.

Perhaps the largest limitation is that the concept of "school change" is both amorphous and ambiguous. All organizations change over time. The original intent of this research was to capture school change specifically related to the Virginia World Class Education Initiative. This initiative operated under the premise that "All Children Can Learn" and was designed to create students who are able to make decisions, think critically, solve complex problems, quantify, and learn cooperatively. As the survey was being developed, the political climate shifted in Virginia, and educational priorities shifted into refinement of Standards of Learning. An exploration of change specifically tied to the World Class Education Initiative became less appropriate. Thus, the survey definition of "change" broadened to be more inclusive and less defined than only changes related to World Class Education. Rather, respondents were asked to respond to generic restructuring change.

Data Analysis

Frequency distributions were compiled for survey questions and reported in table format in the *Virginia World Class Education Initiative Pre and Early Adolescent School Change* final report presented to the Virginia Department of Education on July 31, 1994. This report serves to descriptively summarize that data. Qualitative analysis of open ended questions are included in the results and discussion sections of this report. A qualitative analysis was used to collapse the

information gathered into subsets by each question. Each response was entered verbatim into a central file by question number. Researchers independently collapsed responses from respondents into categories and cluster grouped categories, so as to capture ideas that were most often expressed. Additionally, observations were noted that highlighted distinguishing features of a particular school's change process. These categories were compared, and consensus was reached regarding the intent of the responses, by school.

Results

Of the 1900 surveys mailed, 1129 were completed and returned and an additional 90 were returned without completion This represented a response rate of 64% and a sample of 134 schools in Virginia, from 110 districts (32 city and 78 county).

Frequency distributions for the 687 variables of the *School Change Process Survey* were tabulated using SPSS for Windows. A review of the demographics demonstrates the sample was fairly consistent with research on the age, gender, ethnicity and teaching experience commonly represented in public schools, when compared with data on file at the Virginia Department of Education.

Change Process

In order to examine the process of change in Virginia schools, the survey asked to what extent the respondent's school had undergone change in the last five years. Thirty six percent of the respondents reported that their schools had changed significantly, while 44% described their school changes as moderate, in the last five years. As reported in the literature, change seems to be a continuous process for Virginia schools, as for those in other states. Less than one percent of the schools surveyed reported that they had not changed. That finding hardly seems significant in that change is a constant in any organization. However, the fact that 80% of respondents felt that changes had been moderate to significant in the last five years is indicative of the high amount of change affecting Virginia schools.

Of even greater interest is school and community satisfaction with changes that were made. The vast majority of respondents reported moderate to significant satisfaction with changes made.

Of the respondents, approximately 47% were moderately to very involved in the school's planning for change. Only about 17% were not involved in the process. Of interest is the fact that the majority of those who felt least involved and valued were parents. It appears that schools need to make parents feel more involved and valued during the decision-making and change process, if they desire parental support and involvement after changes have been instituted.

Who was involved in the decision-making process?

Given a list of ten positions/roles, respondents were asked to identify those positions/roles of people who were involved in the change planning process. Perceptions of respondents indicated that administrators (92%) and teachers (87%) were the most involved in the planning process. Business leaders (19%) and community members (17%) were the least involved. This is of special interest when one notes that the emphasis in many schools is to develop partnerships between communities, businesses and schools. It would seem logical to include more community and business leaders in the decision-making processes, if they are to be involved in the total educational processes.

What strategies are used to make change?

Goal definition, vision development, brainstorming, and needs assessment were cited as the most highly used strategies to initiate change. However, a full 20% of respondents indicated "don't know" when asked about what strategies were used in the decision-making process. Indeed the highly political nature of the change process may have gotten lost in nebulous "don't know" category.

Why do schools in Virginia change?

The listed reasons for change included the need to prepare students for future work, to address social conditions, to respond to federal and state mandates, and to address student well-being. Additional identified reasons for change clustered around the middle school movement; desire for

general school improvement; and Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) evaluation reports. These reasons are comparable to literature on the reasons schools make changes. These reasons are also at the forefront of impending national and state legislative arguments. It appears that Virginia schools are being pushed from the top-down, rather than from the local level, to make changes.

While initiatives recognized by Virginia educators as contributing most to change include the America 2000 and the Virginia World Class Education Initiative, of even greater concern is that the majority of those surveyed are uncertain or don't know which legislative mandates are driving the changes in their schools. It seems that the information necessary to adequately address federal mandates, state initiatives, and grants is not getting into the mainstream of the community involved with education.

A suggestion from this interpretation would lead one to consider more in-service education and public information being made available to the community regarding the nature of the effects of legislature on local education. The overall survey data indicate general awareness of top-down mandates, but not specific awareness of how any particular mandate or movement impacted specific school change.

Barriers to the Change Process

Seventy-four percent of the respondents indicated that barriers to implementation of change plans were explored during the planning process. In addition, respondents were asked to identify those barriers encountered when making changes.

Specifically identified barriers included time, training, and space. Overwhelmingly, lack of funding was considered the major barrier to effective change.

When asked, *how successful is your program, based upon your identified reasons/goals for change?*, 43% indicated somewhat successful and 41% definitely successful. Teacher satisfaction

(44%) and student scores/report (42%) were the most frequent measures of change success. Parental satisfaction was a close third at 39%. Perceived "satisfaction" with change outweighed use of specific learning outcome data to substantiate the success of changes made. Additional cited means of success included being identified as a "Blue Ribbon" school, and receiving positive SACS evaluations. A large number of respondents who wrote in responses indicated that it is too early yet to evaluate the success of their changes. This may be the most telling response, calling to question the point at which change is institutionalized.

Data Analysis and Discussion of Open-Ended Survey Question Responses

The second part of the survey was comprised of open-ended questions, designed to examine more site-specific changes, as well as the feelings of those involved with the planning and implementation phases of change. The results are summarized following each question, with comments and conclusions focused back to the literature review and demographics portion of the survey.

What specific curricular changes were made as a result of your change efforts?

Looking at the overall data, curricular changes can be clustered in patterns of multiple responses by all schools. There were a variety of common changes listed by many of the surveyed constituents which included:

teaming (team teaching, planning)
flexible scheduling
cooperative learning
use of portfolios
heterogeneous grouping
whole language (literature-based curriculum)
technology integration
inclusion programs: more attention to slower learners
infusion of higher order thinking skills
more active learning.

A closer analysis reveals that individual schools seemed to focus on three or four changes. There seemed to be general consensus within schools as to what the major changes were, although

more responses from parents indicated "Don't Know." This may indicate lack of awareness on the parents' parts as to exactly what changes were being implemented.

Some schools indeed seemed to "focus" on particular areas of change. For example, responses from one school repeatedly had similar responses: "Technology was added." "Science/math lab;" "More technology." However, there were more schools which had shotgun-type responses which listed a broad array of change (such as the list above) with little correlation among respondents. This may indicate that there are a variety of changes being made and/or that different changes were being instituted by different constituencies.

The most telling feature of the responses to this question were that the majority of responses were not directly related to curriculum change as queried. Rather, the changes were often organizational or instructional in nature. There does not seem to be a clear understanding of the concept of "curriculum" as opposed to organization or instruction. Indeed, the majority of actual changes were organizational in nature. Teaming and scheduling were the most often listed form of school change.

What staffing changes were made as a result of your change efforts?

This particular question generated a lot of "No Responses." The correlation of responses within schools was very low. Responses within a single school ranged from "None" to "Reassignment of teachers to better utilize strengths" to "Were able to hire some very capable teachers." It was thus difficult to make sense of the responses to this question in a meaningful way.

However, it was interesting to note that the school that had made focused change in a particular area (e.g., "technology") indeed had increased staff in that area. It was noted that for that school, a teacher assistant was added to the computer lab and math/science teachers were added to the staff.

The most common response to this questions was that staff had been reorganized into teams.

This reflects the changes toward middle school organization. These responses also validated the previous question's responses which listed teaming as a major school change.

Another common response was that no staff were added due to lack of funding. This supports the issue of funding as being a barrier toward making effective school change if effective school change is dependent upon additional staff.

Although the question specifically asked about staffing changes related to change efforts, it is not clear from the responses just how any staffing changes related to specific change efforts. For example, if a school listed "reading teacher added," that might be to help support change toward a whole language curriculum or it could simply mean an additional reading teacher was added.

What staff development training was provided (if any)?

Again, there was not as much inter-respondent correlation as might be expected. A common type of response included "Constant development through local and state training." The lack of specificity of answers precludes in-depth analysis of either the level or type of training staff received related to change.

Schools that did have correlated responses had focused training back to the type of changes indicated earlier. For example, the school that indicated consistently that increased use of technology was an implemented change, not only had an increase in staff to support the computer center, but also had focused inservice sessions on the use of technology.

Most schools responded with a general listing of inservice workshops. Common types of training included cooperative learning; use of math manipulatives; assertive discipline; whole language; and mainstreaming. The model of training appears to be a workshop model of 3-5 sessions during the course of the academic year on a variety of topics. Thus, teachers would be given a on-shot workshop on any one particular topic. There was agreement that staff development is being offered; however, the level of training does not seem to be high enough. A pervasive change barrier listed

was lack of training. There does not appear to be follow-up that provides teachers with support in moving from a knowledge phase about a topic to an implementation phase of being able to use the new knowledge. Additionally, teachers consistently complained that training did not support them over a long enough period of time.

One tension that clearly emerges from this study is that more staff training is needed (particularly in the areas of targeted change); yet staff training often pulls teachers away from their primary duties and/or increases the amount of committed work time (i.e., after school hours or summer institutes). How to give teachers increased knowledge and expertise in a non-invasive manner is a crux question for staff development personnel.

What strategies did you find to be helpful (for instituting change)?

Almost seven out of ten responses were either a "no response" or a "don't know." This may have been a confusing question as to what strategies were meant. Of the actual responses, there seemed to be a consensus around the notion of "working together to problem solve and plan instruction," or "We met in teams to define goals & strategies." Many responses included the concept of planning: on-going planning time. Collaborative planning time was clearly a positive strategy.

Another helpful strategy was to have faculty read common articles and then discuss them in small groups. From that common research base, the faculty voted on specific changes to pursue.

One school specifically mentioned visitations as being helpful; their faculty had the opportunity to visit other middle schools in Virginia.

Perhaps the most pragmatic response was, "Beginning each day with two Tylenol."

What people or other resources were helpful?

Clearly the number one resource is people. Whether it was fellow teachers, supportive administrators, generic "community support," or external consultants, most of the responses listed other people as being particularly helpful.

Learning resource personnel were seen as key supporters. Resource teachers were mentioned by a variety of staff at many schools. Throughout this survey it has been noted that special education teachers are increasingly being seen as resource consultants.

The collegial/social nature of the teaching experience became apparent through the responses to this question. Support from others is clearly seen as a necessity. Indeed, several respondents listed people by name whom they found especially helpful. This speaks to the innately human aspect of the change process.

Please list any barriers you encountered in the change process.

Overwhelmingly, the barriers began with, "Lack of..." Lack of money, time, communication, understanding, and teacher support were very common responses.

One disgruntled respondent took a twist on the question and responded, "From my observations, the 'barrier' to success has been less learning on the part of the student." Of course the implication here is that the "change process" does not necessarily equate to more or better learning.

One respondent noted that, "Rapid simultaneous change in at least four areas (writing, math, enrichment, and incorporation of higher level thinking skills) has been difficult to absorb and implement comfortably." Several other respondents noted a lack of focus and the difficulty of implementing too many changes at once. The implication is that individual changes weren't being managed from an integrative visionary perspective which would connect them in a holistic way. Thus, rather than working together to "reform" education, the changes become fragmented pieces of reform which don't necessarily fit together in a meaningful way.

There were many comments regarding long in-services after school and the amount of time that takes away from direct student services.

It was interesting to note particular schools which seemed to have most responses listing many

barriers and other schools having most responses which seemed to indicate few to no barriers. From the responses to this question, you get a sense of either a beleaguered faculty, wearied by the stresses of change; or a vitalized faculty, energized by the changes happening.

Most common barriers included:

funding (for materials, supplies, furniture, staffing, etc.)
time
teacher resistance
feeling overwhelmed
differences in educational philosophy.

An interesting observation was that there is "A need for professionals to be presented all (pros & cons) perspectives of 'what the research says.' More often than not, only the research that supports the direction that the district wants to take is presented." This brings up the important issue of educational philosophy and how the change process is or isn't related to a particular philosophical perspective. Responses indicate that a barrier to change is a teacher's belief system. Philosophy emerged as having critical implications for the types of changes that would be successful.

List the ways you overcame barriers.

Teacher sacrifice of time and money was a common theme. In some cases, this "sacrifice" is listed as a positive, energizing factor; in other cases it is clearly listed as a negative factor: "For two years now our team (5 teachers) has had to rewrite each individual student's schedule to balance class loads and ensure students are assigned to correct courses. We have to do this after school starts which takes away from instructional planning. In effect, we are doing the job of guidance instead of preparing lessons. We have done it but this barrier is a result of gross mismanagement."

Parent meetings, community meetings, and increased communication were all ways which effectively overcome communication barriers. Clear communication was perceived as being absolutely critical to any hope for successful change.

Funding problems were circumvented by supportive funds from the PTA, community businesses, and the school board

One pragmatic response to overcoming barriers was that the change initiatives were significantly scaled back. Another respondent from that same school mentioned that change only took place for those who wished it to. This certainly puts less pressure on group conformance. In this way, the barrier is actually removed so as to not pose a problem.

The most interesting response was that the school used, "One year trial to see if it worked. We are in our fourth year now." The old "try it, you'll like it!" may be one way to hurdle a change barrier.

Did the media have any impact upon your change efforts?

The overwhelming responses indicated "No, the media did not have any impact upon our change efforts." There was indeed consensus that the media has not been playing a big role in the change process. This seems ironic given the observation in the previous question that clear communication is absolutely critical. What broader means of communication is there than the general media?

Several respondents indicated that they had read or studied research literature. Professional journals and literature were listed as being important means of learning about educational research. Some schools talked about sharing this information among faculty.

There was mention that the media provided publicity for school events. Many people mentioned that although the media publicized education information, its effect on change efforts was unknown. Those who responded that the media did impact change efforts were overwhelmingly positive; i.e., the media gave positive coverage which supported the changes being instituted or the negative information being published (e.g., low test scores) also spoke toward needed changes. There was some mention of negative publicity toward the World Class Education Initiative which may have

had an adverse impact on school changes.

One interpretation of these responses might be that the media was not used to best advantage given the few respondents that said the media had any impact at all on their change efforts. Or perhaps the media isn't as influential as generally thought

Please describe your feelings regarding the changes that were made as a result of your restructuring efforts.

This question generated the lengthiest responses. Change obviously effects people's emotions as this question brought a response from virtually everyone. Not only was the quantity of response greater, but the quality of the response was also greater in that more information was given through this question.

The responses were cautiously optimistic; tinged with the reality of difficulties, there was acknowledgement that the results might be worth the work. For example: "Although it meant long hours, and lots of extra paper work, and what seemed like an endless round of meetings, I am proud of the changes our school has made and pleased that the part I played helped make it successful. We went through the forming-storming-norming-and performing stages and just keep getting better. The community supports our efforts and parents are pleased."

There was clearly a pattern within schools that indicated either general satisfaction or general dissatisfaction with what was happening. There is evidence of a camaraderie of spirit that can either help or hinder a community of change. A community committed to change seems to breed contentment; a community lacking commitment seems to breed discontent and resentment. Of course many schools have constituents at all parts of the satisfaction continuum, from the very frustrated, "I feel anxious, powerless, apprehensive, and resentful!" who see change as a fad and teachers as pawns of the administration; to the cautious, "I feel apprehension and ambivalence; to the optimistic, "I feel that our efforts regarding our changes have been very positive."

Somehow this continuum of feelings needs to be moderated. However, on this survey, the weight of responses falls on the positive end of the continuum, with acknowledgement that "We've only just begun..." and there are miles to go on a journey of change. A poignant reminder was written that "The restructuring efforts have only begun. We have many years to go in developing for the 21st century."

Some common causes of discontent were:

too many changes being implemented at once
not enough training to implement specific changes (e.g., inclusion)
too much paperwork
too many staff meetings eating into planning and/or instruction
feeling overwhelmed
not wanting to institute "fads"
need for time to assimilate information and implement change

Some common causes of content were:

closer connection among staff and students
better learning experiences being developed
improved self-esteem/pride, both schoolwide and/or individually
raised student interest
more creative delivery of instruction
more enthusiasm among students

It is interesting to note the number of positive responses that are based on the affective domain; i.e., people are content if they feel good about themselves or observe others being interested and enthused. However, perhaps there should be a note of caution inserted that this contentment with change is so correlated with the affect. There was virtually no mention of increased test scores or other evidence of increased student learning. Yes, there was much mention of increased student *interest* in learning; but not evidence of actual increase in learning. Process instruction appears to be wedded to the types of changes being made. Whether or not this is at the expense of content instruction is another issue not specifically probed. However, it is an interesting and important observation that general satisfaction is indeed highly correlated with the affective atmosphere of a particular school.

Concluding Survey Comments

The survey certainly confirms that a variety of educational changes are occurring throughout the state of Virginia. Many of the changes reported by the middle school community indicate general changes recommended in the middle school literature (e.g., teaming; flexible scheduling; heterogeneous grouping; cooperative learning; special education inclusion practices; infusion of technology).

There is a moderate degree of frustration with the changes occurring across the state. This frustration appears to be borne from being overwhelmed with the number of changes at one time. Schools that understand how the various specific changes fit together are faring better than schools which are implementing a succession of specific changes with no overall picture of how the various specific changes fit together into a larger picture of what schools should be about.

Frustration can be sensed in the amount of time and effort required of school staff to make change happen. Interestingly, many teachers express an energy that is being infused into their schools by the very same time and effort that adds so much frustration to the change process. Perhaps that is an inevitable incongruity.

Although there appears to be a moderate amount of frustration with the changes, overall the survey indicates general satisfaction with changes that are happening. There is general consensus that change is needed and that although difficult, really is making an impact on student motivation.

Parents also evidence an overall positive perception of the change process. However, there is a clear dichotomy between,m parents/outside community and teachers/inside community in the level of knowledge about the change that are occurring. This speaks to the need for more open dialogue between schools and the community-at-large.

What is totally missing from the survey is any indication that changes underway are impacting actual student learning. There is much discussion of how student feel getter about themselves and

how there is more communication among staff and student; but there is little indication that actual curricular changes are being made. Additionally, there is little to no indication that data rare being used to monitor the outcomes of change.

This perhaps is the most import finding of the survey: changes are occurring at the overall program level, but re only beginning to trickle to the level of classroom implementation. At this point in time, teachers are feeling overwhelmed with a succession of changes they are expected to implement. They are feeling little support in the way of training. There is much work to be done to get integrated systemic reform working at the bottom-line classroom level. There is also a clear need to better evaluate how change impacts student learning.

As this survey was underway, a change in both the political arena and educational leadership at the Virginia Department of Education was occurring. An Outcomes-Based-Education initiative was replaced with a revision of more behavioral Standards of Learning. The implications of shifting philosophical stance at the policy level domino into Virginia classrooms in multiple ways which may or may not have been captured by this survey.

In addition to this study's survey results, case studies of national change schools were examined in order to juxtapose Virginia school change against the national educational reform movement. The summary of those studies is presented in a separate paper entitled, *Case Studies of Promising Change Schools*.

Factors which seem to facilitate change begin with an understanding of what changes should be made and why they should be made. This is facilitated by reading of the research literature and targeting inservice workshops.

It seems to take strong administrative leadership to be able to spearhead the change process and marshall the necessary resources to made the process happen. The difficult task is to coordinate multiple changes in a synergistic, holistic manner so that schools perceive an integrated vision of what

reforms the changes will effect rather than just a series of piecemeal changes that don't affect each other and only serve to exhaust a staff.

Communication among all internal (i.e., school personnel) and external (i.e., larger community) constituents is a major facilitating factor to change. It is communication which affects every aspect of the change process from communicating a philosophy and plan to implement that philosophy to the communication of evaluation results which tell all constituents how the changes are making an impact.

Indeed funding and resources are considered a large barrier to effective change. The garnering and targeting of resources can do a lot to facilitate change.

Perhaps the major factor which can either facilitate or inhibit change is philosophical coherence. When a school and community have a basic philosophy of what education should be about, then any change toward that philosophy will stand a much greater chance of acceptance.

The process of change clearly takes time and effort. The survey results indicate that a school must be prepared to spend time and work hard to make changes take effect. Change will not happen just by wanting it to happen.

Based on the survey, it appears that change can either galvanize or polarize a school and/or community. When change is viewed as positive by the community-at-large (including the school), there is a real cohesiveness of community. Bonds are strengthened and relationships are firmed. However, change that is resisted and not viewed as positive, can indeed create tensions among those who are initiating change and those who are resisting that change. This polarization can tear working relationships apart.

Certainly there are direct indications that the change process directly affects the organization of the school. It can impact the configuration of teachers (how they work together) and can impact the scheduling of students and their classes.

There is definitely evidence that the change process can impact instructional strategies. A shift toward more group work, cooperative learning endeavors, and project work is indicated.

What is not indicated, is how the change process is affecting what is being learned in the classroom. Indeed much of the change process seems to be at the early stages of people learning about recent trends and issues and trying to initiate them. This survey indicates that changes are largely not institutionalized yet.

The biggest positive outcome seems to be that change can create a positive climate of motivation toward improvement. Change can indeed energize and revitalize schools and communities. It can also exhaust a school if not effected wisely.

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APPENDIX A

School Change Process Survey

Directions:

1. Please darken the circle on the answer sheet which corresponds to the answer which most accurately reflects your beliefs or opinions regarding the statements below.

2. Where comments are requested or blanks are available, please write directly on the survey booklet.

3. Some questions/statements may have more than one response. In such cases, complete all responses which apply.

4. Upon completion please return the survey to your principal. He/She will then return the survey to the Virginia Department of Education.

Part I

1. Number of years as a professional in education:

   a = 0
   b = 1 - 2
   c = 3 - 5
   d = 6 - 10
   e = 11 - 15
   f = 15 - 20
   g = More than 20
   h = does not apply (parent)

2. Number of years in current position:

   a = 1st year
   b = 1 - 2
   c = 3 - 5
   d = 6 - 10
   e = 11 - 15
   f = 16 - 20
   g = More than 20
   h = Does not apply (Parent)

3. Number of years in present school system:

   a = 1st year
   b = 1 - 2
   c = 3 - 5
   d = 6 - 10
   e = 11 - 15
   f = 16 - 20
   g = More than 20

4. Your age range:

a = Under 20 years
b = 21 - 25
c = 26 - 35
d = 36 - 45
e = 46 - 55
f = 56 - 65
g = Over 65

5. Your gender:

a = Female
b = Male

6. Your race/ethnicity:

a - Anglo-American (Caucasian)
b = African-American
c = Asian-American
d = Hispanic-American (Latino)
e = Native American
f = Other - List: _____

7. Please describe <u>your</u> primary assignment/position in your school

a = Classroom Teacher (Grade/s): _____
b = Specialty Teacher (e.g. P.E. Art Music (Specify): _____
c = Support Staff (e.g. Counselor)
d = Parent
e = Special Education Teacher (e.g. E.M.R. T.M.R. Gifted)
f = Principal

8. How much has your school changed in the last five years?

1	2	3	4
Not at all	Small Amount	Moderate Amount	Significant Amount

9. How satisfied are you with the changes made during the last five years?

1	2	3	4
Not at all	Somewhat Satisfied	Moderately Satisfied	Very Satisfied

10. What was your level of involvement in your school's planning for change?

1	2	3	4
None	Somewhat Involved	Moderately Involved	Very Involved

11. Please identify the positions/roles of people involved in the change planning process: (Mark all that apply).

a = Teachers
b = Administrators
c = Counselors
d = Students
e = School Board Governing Body Members
f = Specialty area support teachers
g = Other school support personnel - List: _____
h = Parents
i = Business leaders
j = Community members - List: _____

12. There are many ways to plan for change. What <u>strategies</u> were used during your school's decision-making process? (Mark all that apply).

a = Brainstorming
b = Goal definition
c = Vision/Mission Development
d = Needs assessment/community survey
e = General survey
f = On-site visitation of other schools
g = Uncertain/Don't know
h = Other - List: _____

13. Do you feel that your participation was valued by others involved in the decision-making process?

1	2	3	4
Not at all	Somewhat	Definitely	Don't know

14. <u>WHY</u> did your school decide to make changes? **(Mark all that apply).**

a = Availability of State/Federal Grant Funding
b = As a result of standardized test scores
c = Community pressure - Explain: _____
_____
d = Change in population of the community
e = To address social conditions in the school/community
f = Preparation of students for future work force
g = Response to Federal or State Mandates
h = To address student well-being/health conditions
i = Uncertain/Don't know
j = Other = (ie: curriculum, etc.): _____
_____

Note: If more than one of these responses apply, please list their order of importance here:

1st _____	4th _____	7th _____
2nd _____	5th _____	8th _____
3rd _____	6th _____	9th _____

15. Which of the following Mandates or Initiatives contributed to your decision to restructure? (Mark all that apply*).

a = America 2000
b = Virginia World Class Education Initiative
c = Americans with Disabilities Act (I.D.E.A.)
d = P. L. 94-142 (Equal Rights for Handicapped Act)
e = Title IX (Equal rights for women).
f = Uncertain/Don't Know
g = Other = List: _____
_____

Note: *If more than one of these contributed, please list the order of importance to your change effort.

1st _____ 4th _____
2nd _____ 5th _____
3rd _____ 6th _____

16. Were barriers to implementation of your plan explored during the planning process?

a = Yes b = No

17. Identify barriers encountered as you made/are making the changes:

a = Lack of money in planning stage
b = Lack of funds to carry out plan
c = Lack of community support
d = Lack of administrative support
e = Lack of teacher support
f = Lack of student support
g = Lack of parental support
h = Uncertain/Don't know
i = Other = List: _____
_____

18. How successful is your program, based upon your identified reasons/goals for changing?

1	2	3	4
Not Successful	Somewhat Successful	Very Successful	Don't Know

19. How was success evaluated?

a = Student scores/report
b = Teacher satisfaction
c = Parental satisfaction
d = Was not evaluated
e = Uncertain/Don't know
f = Other = List: _____
_____

Part III

In the space below, please respond to the questions and make suggestions, based upon your experience, which may be helpful to others preparing to change their pre and early adolescent school programs:

20. What specific curricular changes were made as a result of your change efforts?

21. What staffing changes were made as a result of your change efforts?

22. What staff development training was provided (if any)?

23. What strategies did you find to be helpful?

24. What people or other resources were helpful?

25. Please list any barriers you encountered in the change process.

26. With respect to item #25, list the ways you overcame those barriers.

27. Did the media have any impact upon your change efforts? (If yes, please explain).

28. Please describe your **feelings** regarding the changes that were made as a result of your restructuring efforts.

RESTRUCTURING EDUCATION FOR THE 21st CENTURY: A UNIVERSITY CONSORTIUM STUDY

Abstract and Tables

Presented at

The American Educational Research Association Meeting
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Abstract: The Change Process As It Relates To Pre And Early Adolescent School Restructuring

This project was designed to gain insight into factors which facilitate or inhibit change; to better understand how the change process affects the school/community population; and to make recommendations to school and community personnel who may face change in the future. These purposes were accomplished through a three-tier research design which included a review of the literature on the change process; a survey of 190 randomly selected middle level Virginia schools; and, case studies of three out-of-state schools which are in the process of implementing major changes.

Results of both the survey and the case studies appear to validate each other in that there was agreement that a consensually described school mission is fundamental to effective change; change takes enormous time and effort; both resources and training need to be channeled toward systemic changes rather than piecemeal, inservice workshops; hiring of personnel who are both philosophically aligned with a school's mission and have professional expertise which aligns with school mission can greatly enhance the change process; both on-going evaluation of all aspects of the change process and communication among all change constituents are absolutely critical components to the change process; and the importance of leadership was noted: leadership must have a clear sense of mission, a vision as to where that mission is headed, and the energy to integrate multiple changes at once.

The project results appear to support the literature on change. However, there is great discrepancy between the ideal of "systemic" change and the types of changes happening in Virginia schools. It appears that schools are grappling with a multiplicity of changes being done on either a piecemeal basis or on a programmatic basis (e.g., overall change to a middle school concept program) but these changes are not being integrated in the notion of broad, systemic change which represents any fundamental educational paradigm shift.

It is clear that change is a process rather than a product. As such, more work needs to be done communicating to LEA's how to integrate a variety of types of change toward an operational mission of effective education.

GENERAL SURVEY INFORMATION

Survey mailed to 190 Virginia middle schools

Randomization established through selection of every 8th school on an alphabetized list of Virginia middle schools.

No more than four schools were chosen from any given school division.

Superintendents sent questionnaire packets to targeted schools.

Principals distributed surveys to parents, classroom teachers, specialty area teachers, and administrators.

Limitations

Voluntary/self-report status of respondents

School principals may have reflected bias in survey distribution

Survey yielded only perceptual data

Lack of specific definition of school "change"

Survey Statistics:

1900 surveys mailed

1129 returned completed + 90 returned uncompleted

64% response rate representing 134 middle schools in Virginia from 110 districts.

Study Purposes

1) to gain insight into factors which facilitate or inhibit change;

2) to better understand how the change process effects the school/community population;

3) to make recommendations to school and community personnel who may face change in the future.

Data Tiers

1) A review of the literature on school change.

2) A survey of parents, teachers, and school administrators at schools who had undergone change during the last 5 years.

3) Site visits to out-of-state "change" schools by research team members, to gather information on their procedures for successful changes.

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Table 1
Descriptive Profile of Respondents

Variables	N	%
Number of Years in Current Position		
1st year	83	7.5
1 to 2 years	105	9.5
3 to 5 years	278	25.1
6 to 10 years	188	17.0
11 to 15 years	110	9.9
16 to 20 years	69	6.2
More than 20 years	79	7.1
Does Not Apply	195	17.6
	1107	100.0
Years in Present School system		
1st year	36	3.3
1 to 2 years	66	6.0
3 to 5 years	253	23.1
6 to 10 years	254	23.2
11 to 15 years	153	14.0
16 to 20 years	145	13.3
More than 20 years	186	17.0
	1093	100.0

Table 2
Frequencies of Change Process Variables

Variables	N	%
School Change in 5 years		
Not at All	5	.5
Small Amount	209	19.3
Moderate Amount	481	44.5
Significant Amount	386	35.7
	1081	100.0
Satisfaction with Changes		
Not at All	32	3.0
Small Amount	204	18.9
Moderate Amount	476	44.1
Significant Amount	368	34.1
	1080	100.0

Level of Involvement in Change Process		
None	181	16.6
Somewhat Involved	400	36.6
Moderately	297	27.2
Very Involved	214	19.6
	1092	100.0
Was participation in change process valued by others		
Not at All	128	12.0
Somewhat	412	38.6
Definitely	406	38.1
Don't Know	121	11.3
	1067	100.0

Table 3
Positions of People Involved in Change Planning Process

(N=1129)

Positions	%
Teachers	86.6
Administrators	91.8
Counselors	61.5
Students	32.2
School Board Governing Body	56.7
Specialty area support teachers	51.6
Other school support	21.5
Parents	63.6
Business leaders	18.9
Community Members	16.7

Table 4
Strategies Used in Decision-Making Process

(N=1129)

Strategies	%
Brainstorming	55.4
Goal definition	64.0
Vision/Mission Development	56.9
Needs assessment/community survey	50.8
General Survey	28.7
On-site visitation by other school	40.9
Uncertain/Don't Know	19.3
Other	6.1

Table 5
Reasons Schools Made Changes

(N=1129)

Reasons Why	%
State/Federal Grants	23.8
Results from standardized test scores	34.5
Community pressure	12.6
Change in community population	23.6
To address social conditions	38.6
Preparation of students for work	41.2
Response to Fed./State Mandates	34.8
To address student well-being	32.2
Uncertain	13.3
Other	26.1

Table 6
Mandates that Contributed to the restructur

(N=1129)

trategies	%
America 2000	23.2
VA World Class Education Initiative	24.6
Americans with Disabilities Act	12.7
PL 94-142 (Equals Rights for Handicap)	17.4
Equal Rights for Women	2.7
Uncertain/Don't Know	51.7

Table 7
Barriers Encountered in Change Process

(N=1129)

Barriers	%
No money in planning stage	30.1
No funds to carry out plans	46.7
No community support	12.7
No administrative support	9.8
No teacher support	16.7
No student support	6.4
No parental support	21.3
Uncertain/Don't know	18.9
Other	5.1

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Table 8
(N=1129)

How was success measured	%
Student scores/report	42.2
Teacher satisfaction	43.8
Parental satisfaction	38.4
Was not evaluated	10.9
Uncertain/Don't know	24.8
Other	9.1

Most Common Changes

teaming (team teaching, planning)
flexible scheduling
cooperative learning
use of portfolios
heterogeneous grouping
whole language (literature-based curriculum)
technology integration
inclusion programs: more attention to slow learners
infusion of higher order thinking skills
more active learning

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Some common causes of discontent were:

- too many changes being implemented at once
- not enough training to implement specific changes (e.g., inclusion)
- too much paperwork
- too many staff meetings eating into planning and/or instruction
- feeling overwhelmed
- not wanting to institute "fads"
- need for time to assimilate information and implement change

Some common causes of content were:

- closer connection among staff and students
- better learning experiences being developed
- improved self-esteem/pride, both schoolwide and/or individually
- raised student interest
- more creative delivery of instruction
- more enthusiasm among students

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